

Educational Equity

PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY IN UTAH'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Beliefs About Best Practices for Teaching and Learning

The dynamic interplay among the student, the teacher, and the curriculum is at the heart of school learning. The quality of these interactions depends not only on the teaching/learning process itself but also on the nurturing context provided by the total school community, including parents, administrators, school boards, other local and state policymakers, businesses, institutions of higher learning, and community residents.

The developers of *Principles for Equity in Utah's Public Schools* believe that the following educational practices promote learning in schools most effectively. While these "best practices" focus on what teachers and students do, all other members of school communities must help to create the conditions under which such work can be accomplished. The energetic support of the wider community is essential for student success.

BELIEFS ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

1. Teachers promote respect for diversity by valuing and challenging all learners.
2. Teachers make connections within and between academic subjects and the increasingly diverse world outside of school.
3. Teachers connect curriculum, instruction, and assessment in a meaningful way.
4. Teachers create a climate that encourages student confidence and appropriate risk-taking.
5. Teachers expect students to communicate and collaborate.
6. Students and teachers use technology to enhance teaching and learning.
7. Students learn by solving problems and applying knowledge to new situations.
8. Students engage in experiential and active learning.
9. Students and teachers use a variety of instructional resources.

Equity Principles

EQUITY--fair and just treatment of students, staff, and community members--must be the cornerstone of an educational framework. Achieving equity means individual differences are valued; high expectations are held for all; instruction occurs in inclusive environments; diversity is recognized and appreciated; and discrimination, stereotyping, and bias are not accepted.

Equity recognizes the need to treat unequals differently in order to ensure that the **quality** of the educational experiences are **equal** and of high standards.

DIVERSITY AND DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS are terms which encompass the variety in people due to different backgrounds. Throughout this document, diversity and diverse backgrounds include, but are not limited to, differences due to national origin, primary language, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or economic status.

The Utah State Board of Education believes that all students should be provided with equitable opportunities to learn and flourish in Utah's public schools.

This publication constitutes a statement on equity and diversity in Utah's public schools and represents the position of the Utah State Board of Education on equity and diversity.

The Principles for Equity in Utah's Public Schools is intended to aid school personnel in their efforts to provide students with educational opportunities compatible with administrative rule R277-112 and applicable state and federal laws.

Statement of Equity and Diversity in Utah's Public Schools

The **Utah State Board of Education** believes that all students can learn and must have full opportunity to learn. The Utah State Board of Education is committed to effecting change in student performance by providing an appropriate school curriculum, quality instruction, a safe and caring school climate, ongoing teacher education, and frequent parent involvement in order to ensure that all students are provided with equitable opportunities to learn.

The final outcome of effective and equitable instruction must be achievement of students which enables them to be active, thoughtful participants in a rapidly changing society. This vision includes:

1. High expectations for all students.
2. Equitable access to rich curriculum content.
3. High quality instruction in all classrooms.
4. Sensitivity to equity issues by teachers and school administrators.
5. Knowledgeable educators who use inclusive practices.
6. Policies that support and facilitate equity.

In order to support the value that equity permeates all components of public education, equity principles are established for the various components of public education in Utah:

- State, district, and school policies
- Partnerships and community outreach to parents, guardians, and businesses
- Curricula, instructional materials, and frameworks
- Professional development
- Assessment
- Administration
- Technology
- School structure, school climate, and classroom practice

State, District, and School Policies

If **DIVERSITY** is to be valued and equity is to occur, policies must not tolerate subtle or overt prejudice. The policies set at all levels must be actively pursued and supported.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- School districts have policies that address issues of equity.
- Policies ensure that teachers and administrators respect diversity.
- Identified equity issues are addressed with appropriate resources.
- Projects and grants address appropriate issues of equity.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for State, District, and School Policies

- Has a grievance procedure been developed and publicized by the school for resolution of discrimination complaints by students and staff?
- Are human relations skills included among the criteria used to evaluate staff performance?
- Do policies specifically encourage students in diverse groups to participate?
- Has the school district ensured that staff who are knowledgeable about equity issues serve on school committees?
- Has inservice training for staff about strategies and procedures for recognizing and addressing bias and discrimination been provided?
- Do policies include programs that encourage students and parents to value diversity?

Partnerships and Community Outreach to Parents, Guardians, and

SCHOOLS must do all they can to ensure that the community is part of their planning. They must include the voices of diversity in the community that may not have won representation on school councils or boards.

All parents and guardians play a major role in helping children learn. They provide primary care for children and empower them with knowledge, skills, and a positive self-image. Parents and guardians should feel as though they are equal participants with the schools in a collaborative effort to educate their children.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Community outreach activities provide opportunities to discuss values related to equity.
- Representatives of the minority community are included in the dialogue.
- Community outreach activities strive to empower parents and guardians from diverse groups to be engaged in their children's education.
- Parents and guardians are active supporters of activities that address issues of equity.
- Community partnerships include leadership from all facets of the community.
- Alliances among people of different backgrounds are fostered.
- Collaboratives and coalitions are sought with diverse business and industry partners.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Partnerships and Community Outreach to Parents, Guardians, and Businesses

- Are there many opportunities for the community to be included in school activities?
- Have community members been invited to host field trips or act as mentors?
- Are conscious efforts made throughout the year to work with and involve parents and guardians, especially those from backgrounds of diversity?
- Are business coalitions encouraged between people from a variety of backgrounds?
- Is there a program to welcome parents and others into the schools?

Curricula, Instructional Materials, and Frameworks

CURRICULA should show relevancy to today's students and today's world. Too many students view serious academic study as foreign to their everyday world, seeing little practical use for the subjects and considering an interest in them to be strange.

Curriculum revisions should take into consideration the different learning styles of students from diverse backgrounds and avoid stereotyping and bias.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Curriculum materials are selected to ensure that they promote high standards, fairly represent all groups, and encourage participation of all students.
- Equity is addressed as a component within the curriculum framework.
- Teaching strategies support learning for all students from diverse backgrounds.
- Most of the time, instruction occurs in heterogeneous classes.
- All students have access to high quality instructional resources (including books, instructional materials and manipulatives, calculators, and computers).

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Curricula, Instructional Materials, and Frameworks

- Are curriculum materials selected that are of high quality, promote high standards, and are appropriate for all students?
- Does the process for selecting curriculum materials assess the presence of overt or subtle bias and stereotype?
- Is learning time reasonably distributed among whole-class instruction, small group work, and individual study?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT is the process by which professional educators stay current, improve their abilities, and model the importance of learning to their students. Learning is a lifelong process.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Teachers, including those who are members of diverse groups, participate in professional development programs.
- Teachers are prepared and receive appropriate support to teach diverse populations of students.
- Leadership development programs include participants from all segments of the professional staff.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Professional Development

- Do teachers of diversity and from all grade levels participate in professional development programs?
- Are professional development resources distributed fairly?
- Are all teachers prepared to teach diverse groups of students?

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- Identifying and addressing discrimination and bias in daily practices.
- Meeting the needs of students from diverse groups.
- Meeting the needs of staff from diverse groups.
- Teaching groups of diverse students.
- Exploring the learning needs of diverse students.
- Understanding other cultures.
- Accommodating students whose native language is not English.
- Accommodating students with disabilities.
- Using a variety of teaching methods to teach students of diversity.
- Involving parents and guardians from diverse backgrounds in meaningful student education plan (SEP) and student education occupation plan (SEOP) meetings.

Assessment

ASSESSMENT tools should link the curriculum with teaching and learning, consider the context of the subject matter, and not favor one group over another. Assessment is a powerful process with a profound influence on curriculum, instruction, and classroom and school organization.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Methods of student assessment are sensitive to diverse student populations.
- Student assessments are consistent with teaching strategies and are sensitive to diverse student populations.
- When assessing student work, educators use more than one type of assessment tool.
- Student assessments and tests are based on the Core Curriculum standards.
- Assessment instruments hold all students to high standards.
- Baseline data for student achievement are collected.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Assessment

- Have students had opportunities to learn the curriculum being assessed?
- Are students informed of assessment criteria in advance?
- Are methods of student assessment sensitive to diverse student populations?
- Are student assessments consistent with and supportive of teaching strategies?
- Are student assessments based on the Core standards?
- Do assessment instruments measure the performance of all students against high standards?
- Do scoring guides accommodate unanticipated but reasonable responses?
- Are appropriate accommodations made for students with disabilities?

Administration

ADMINISTRATORS must show strong leadership in ensuring awareness and training in equity and in providing appropriate resources and staff development training. Administrators must take the lead in emphasizing the importance of staff development training in equity and diversity.

In addition, administrators are responsible for demonstrating the many advantages that a diverse school population offers.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Administrators actively promote activities that address issues of equity.
- Administrators are responsible for implementing equity laws, rules, and policies.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Administration

- Are issues of equity a part of the regular curriculum as appropriate?
- Are teachers encouraged to attend professional workshops and courses that focus on equity?
- Do teachers represent the rich diversity of the school population?
- Does the administrative evaluation of teachers consider human relations skills and how students from diverse background are treated?
- Are issues of equity part of the agendas at district and state meetings of school administrators?

Technology

The use of **TECHNOLOGY** in instruction can be a powerful tool in ensuring equity. Technology can help students and teachers to develop strategies for problem solving, understanding abstract concepts, integrating school subjects, increasing communication, and providing opportunities for cooperative and individualized instruction.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- All students and teachers have equitable opportunities to learn about and use up-to-date technology and equipment.
- All students and teachers have regular access to the use of up-to-date technology and equipment.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for Technology

- Do all students and staff have an opportunity to learn about technology and equipment?
- Do all students and staff have access to technology education and up-to-date equipment?
- Are computers and software accessible to all students and staff?
- Is stereotyping and bias considered as software is selected?

School Structure, School Climate, and Classroom Practice

CLASSROOM PRACTICES are the result of the knowledge, commitment, and attitudes of the professional teacher. Policy can set the conditions for effective administration and practice, but it cannot predetermine how those decisions will be made. Administrative decisions can reflect policy and can set the conditions for effective practice but cannot control how teachers will act in the classroom at a given point.

Regardless of what policies are established, the implementation must take place in the classroom. Classroom teachers should be helped to develop awareness that equity issues deserve their attention.

Student attitudes toward a subject are strongly influenced by the classroom teacher. Teacher attitudes toward a subject also strongly influence how students perform.

EQUITY PRINCIPLES

- Teachers use teaching strategies appropriate for students in diverse classrooms and are sensitive to the differences and perspectives of diverse populations.
- Teachers provide opportunities for students to understand and value diversity.
- Teachers and students have personal interactions that reflect mutual respect.
- School activities are geared toward the inclusion of students from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

MEASURING UP

Equity Considerations for School Structure, School Climate, and Classroom Practice

- When working with students and parents, do teachers positively reinforce students' abilities and interests regardless of the students' diversity?
- Does communication with all students reflect high expectations?
- Do teachers use the same mannerisms and communicate in the same way with all students?
- Do teachers use varied, professional teaching strategies appropriate for students' diversity?
- Do teachers and administrators take advantage of personal contact with parents to discuss

efforts to ensure equity in the instructional program?

- Are high standards for academic performance used for the evaluation of all students?